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OUTPOSTS

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ROY MCFADDEN

Liverpool Boat

SOFT sea and happy harbour, voyager,
Sailing out with the old year's ebbing hours.
Now home is anywhere, with childhood blown
Leaflike to a dark corner, left to stir
To quick green life only in tree-tossed dream.
Waving goodbye, I die a little too,
And on the windy quay touch fearfully
The final loneliness of self. . . . The stream
Of foam jerks like a handkerchief's goodbye,
As lights and faces dwindle. On the quay
A man sings *Auld Lang Syne* in sad farewell,
Feeling perhaps more than an old year die.

LOUIS JOHNSON

Lines for a Maiden Lady

CREATING God from wisps and shreds of dreams
To whet the agonies of hope upon,
She carried heaven ever in her eye
And bore a look of summer in her strong
Star-gazing way, but every day
Woke with a breath of winter on her limbs.

How could she summon? What then would she do?
Constantly wracked her, mocked her, led astray
Embroidered thoughts and fancies bought and spent
To ease the hour-long evenings, and the gay
Green aspirations found that touched and went
From Spring to Summer and the Autumn through.

She fashioned solely in the flesh's form,
And knew no mind for him whose mystery
Was utterly in his being, like the psalms
She carried in a red-hide livery
And mouthed the shapes, or sought them with her arms,
Finding that quite enough, and live, and warm.

KATHLEEN NOTT

Tidal Basin

ONCE there was a sea—and surely once a wood,
and all my living in a tidal mode
has pushed this rim of darkness round the world;
made mulish silence and distance dully crowd
in leaf-locked struggle which dares not free
a limb of wind, a hint of gold
or velvet room to let a footfall thud.
The fierce life droops, which kept identity,
when fountain-green could break, for tree and tree,
its dull love seeks and weeps upon the ground,
and even the loose sap and light saplings, bound
by such deep weight of dread and dark and tide,
have lagged into a time of fossil wood.

And so my waiting life is stretched and dried
between the drifted wood and the lost tide,
dreaming the dead best into what is to be,
and stuck forgotten ribs as prophecy.

But hands' halloo can never wake that dead
retreat, and though I lengthen sight with shade,
this silence is a bowl of dust. To see
those chinks and darks which fence infinity
is not more likely than this thin light would
replenish me with tumbling shoals of flood.

Indeed from white and random shells has fled
even, it seems, the murmur of the sea,
with echo strangled in the straggling weed,
and on the uncaulked bottom of this bed
the vanished tide has vined an underworld.
With feeble feet that cannot root the sand,
with hapless branching arms the humans stand,
mouthing the ventriloquial seagulls' cry.
And the wrought standards on the esplanade,
like ruins of the over-arching sky,
blasted with drought and silence,
as if their light with their reflection died;
and the numb pharos signals death of land
but strikes no glimmer from the running cloud.

Night will come first and with it come the loud
bones and bellows of the faceless drowned,
until the lid of darkness holds this tide.
And will it be the sea whose blood is cold?
It may be that the soft and airy wood
spreads from its tautness out, and buds a crowd
of horning life. How shall I know what ground
would master my retreat, what music breed
upon my ebbing silence, or what herd
of unseen eyes close on me gently?
And if to rise elate, or if to run afraid,
still the begotten pygmy of that wood,
and still upon the deaf side of that sea?

MAURICE CARPENTER

The Child and the Stranger

ALL of us keep a haven of childhood, a rose
folded about the heart. I have held
from the icy desert of my adolescence
an oasis of green woods and good people.
In those waters jagged edges healed.
Now in the crashing of a city's throes
I have kept the island of my juvenescence
intact; all loveliness in children leaping.

And these who move in the dark earth's giant sleeping
shall feel with me a tremor of the change,
the nipples of the night they have clung to suddenly
withering, a child becomes adult.
But when comes walking the tall familiar stranger,
suave and patient, slender as a steeple?
The feathers on the fingers begin to moult:
Falling to wake under a brimming sun.

RICHARD KELL

Reading Kierkegaard

I HAVE three faiths to choose from on this island,
and every one a risk : should I sail forth
with scant provisions in a tiny boat,
and set my course toward the crystal north,
drowned or starved the loss I bear is double;
and so it is if I should seek the south,
plodding through jungle, swamp and treacherous desert,
no wand of water touch my withered mouth,
and vultures pick the autumn from my bones.
If neither sea nor sand should make my grave,
but lazy I watch this palm-tree dust the moon,
I tempt the fury of the tidal wave.

But no, he says : though three alternatives,
you have a single choice—to put to sea
and aim your prow toward the grim horizon,
and hear love softly lapping on the lee :
there is no time to rummage in reflection,
or lust and lounge with animal aplomb.
The big green book lies open on my hand
and ticks away the seconds like a bomb.

ROLAND MATHIAS

Afternoon in Water Street

THE red importance of the winter sun
Muffled up briskly and in office late
Touches the bartering crowd,
Giving a hat to glory and an effete
Milliner the right to paradise. None
Of these faces, none is more ugly
Than God allowed, and yet none wise
Or with more than a child's reward.
It is already too late to weigh the justice done.

The red light fades, the hard
Lines break and pucker from the till
Wide oceanwards, will bound to course
And wave. And children cut to a half-vest roam
Unkept out of doors, red with a cracker
Of sun and white with cinema tinsel.
Count out the knacker and next season's catch,
Hundreds there are dying now under this hill and home,
And some at a watch that no death can cancel.

SYDNEY TREMAYNE

The End of a Summer

THE summer ends. It has been a wet green season.
October, and the trees are dark with leaves
Though rolling fields are fawn with harvest's stubble
And woods should turn to brown. Oh woods should burn
The year's dry wick in the wind with a flair of colour.
This year it is not so. The summer clings
Like the hopes of the world grown stale. A cold wind rises.

The world smiles like a mask with holes for eyes.
The mood of the time is winter. Talk remembers
That day on the mountain road, gasping to breathe,
The ache of cold in the wind leaning against us,
The snow that clung to the eyes. We crossed the pass.
Head down and blundering we reached the valley
And in the wood startled a hidden bird.

We were nearer then than in this exhausted summer
To harmony with the season. Now the leaves
That flicker against the air like quarrelling nations
Cling on precariously; the light grows old.
And spring's ferocity, with claws of the crocus,
Shall tear their fibres in a sharper wind.

But blood endures beyond the hope of endurance.
Instinctive among the trees a late bird sings.

GUSTAV DAVIDSON

Lost Generation

THEY walk in columns of fear
in vacancies of desire
like long-borne captive voyagers on
a planet not of fire.

Singly or massed their bodies
in slow somnambular paces
probe the elliptical trap of time
with unseeing eyes and faces.

The evening drops on them
with chilling passionless weight
and they pass to unknown geographies
and unknown fate.

LIONEL MONTEITH

Nightmare

I CANNOT escape from the dark people
who lurk at my midnight door.
I cannot turn from the shadows
the loiterers who were there before
reason, and pervade my dreams,
lending fear to a planetary darkness—
and death to what darkness seems.

There is no outriding the eyes
that turn inwards to the absence of sight:
even a god praying to people
to pray is lost in the locked out night.
There is no face in a sightless gloom;
no voice without some listening ear—
so that shadow, loiterer, and room
converge in a single fear.

ANNE WILKINSON

Unbeliever

THE pressure of night is on me. I
Lie stiff and arched against my saviour sleep,
A ghost against his body, bold and black
And lashed all round about my day-desiring flesh.
And cruel my skin creeps, vicious as the cry
Of *I am light, I'll have no truck, no traffic*
With the night.

But night is bold, black, blazed with eyes,
Night has no shudder in
Its whole dark hemisphere of skin,
And night replies *I am your shepherd lover,*
I am your pasture,
I am the shadowed profile of the day.

But I lie dumb,
Ice and fire die tepid on my tongue,
I lie scorched with cold, an unbeliever
In sleep, my saviour.

MICHAEL HAMBURGER

Flowering Cactus

(In memorium Jankel Adler)

WORLDS too can be transplanted, alien griefs cry out,
a foreign ecstasy explode in our own house
or suddenly a desert on the window-sill
burst into purest red. Great metamorphosis
which from a shrivelled cactus conjures liquid fire,
answering absent solitudes and wastes of sky!
Worlds too can wilt; the same green body in whose veins
visions were stored, sand, water, light were taught to speak
is parched beyond endurance: yellow now, then brown,
its flesh hints at no knowledge of potential flowers.

ERNEST FROST

In the Park's Gold

IN the park's gold, the gaseous wild rose
floats on the bush. Coupled with light
the swan's same ecstasy makes brighter fire
towards the distant children and their bored
and sterile master. The summer, raw
with sudden colours, to the lovers signs
a dark concomitance wherein like caves
closed eyes feel scarab walls, red flames
fall to a cricket's tick and grass
dazzles like silver when they kiss,
but to the teacher wounds.

He wishes, seeing them, that all this hurt
beyond his explanation could not write.
He wishes that his grammar would not start
the cave's green gourd to pour the quenching word,
or sorrow stand up like the boys, unheard,
chasing their Naples in a butterfly.
He wishes, where the caves of loving turn,
that in his lonely envy and disgust
he might be sharing the same cave and cry
where is the grave you promised and the trust
that here without identity I lie
and murder all the mirrors where I lodged?

BEN EDWARDS

Age and Youth

THE fires of many nights
are burned upon the face
of one who sits and dreams

fitful as any flame
that marks a flare of wind
expression veers and leaps

here is the sun and wind
erosion's dust and ice
and granite-hard the cliff

and here the rib and fruit
from out the fire of youth
which glows with Adam's pride

the fires of many nights
are burned upon the world
beneath the hands of youth.

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

The Stranger

YOU sing and I must go into the dark
searching for an island of birds uncaged
and one green summer that does not change
or shout but lies limpid as silence on my eyes.

But later when I float on sleep
the cry of children rises from the bed
and a dream breaks from the husk of seed
and the darkness ticks again with time.

I cannot endure these small worlds of flowers
who swim in sunshine and are burned away
not by frost but the flame that keeps them warm
in the fixed orbit of a winter earth.

Scent of forgotten summers, they torment
as if the heart alone were immortal
and love a victim of the recurring seasons
who breeds death from the fertile animal.

You sing and I must go into the dark
searching for an island of birds uncaged
and one green summer that does not change
or shout but lies limpid as silence on my eyes.

TERENCE HEYWOOD

The Pendant North

"When man lives with God his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn."—*Emerson.*

IF only we could lie with God for ever!
But since we can't (and those who say we can
Lie far too deep for words), let's lie in wait
For untold moments of the perfect time.

Thunder may rumble, thunderbolts come down
Charged with a voltage far too vast for earth,
And pock her, peck her with their iron beaks
Inflicting wounds repulsive yet magnetic.

Magnetic, but uncoupled, disconnected:
O hearts of metal! swing towards the North;
Encompassing due North, true North, avoiding
Doom's dragnet and the magnet of the tomb!

Then let us lie in wait and wait on Him,
Not lie in weight on Him. St. Teresa
Felt God as Diamond. Crystal is too sharp
To lie upon, though not to lie with, gazing,

Gazing with rich discernment, gazing, gazing.
But she, the flashy mystic, also found it
Amazing: "If at times I write nonsense,
It is because I make a mess of everything."

If only we could lie with God for ever!
But since we can't then let us lie and wait:
The perfect Diamond does not need our dust
Without: the flashing facets are a mirror
In which we see ourselves, ourselves gazing

And seeing in the icy burning-glass
The world blazing, fire in ice, ourselves
On fire—lying and gazing there until
The amazing Diamond lets us lie Within.

REVIEWS

The Labyrinth: Edwin Muir (Faber and Faber Ltd., 8s. 6d.).
The White Threshold: W. S. Graham (Faber and Faber Ltd., 8s. 6d.).
Collected Poems 1925-1948: Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber Ltd., 12s. 6d.).
The Lady's not for Burning: Christopher Fry (Oxford University Press and Geoffrey Cumberlege, 6s. 0d.).

IF Mr. Muir's poetry, unlike that of his more spectacular contemporaries, provides no base from which the tradition is likely to be developed, it makes at least a distinctive contribution to the present structure. His book follows in a familiar way the pattern of a pilgrimage. Yet in no sense is he a pilgrim for he knows neither whence he came nor where his journey may lead. His life was already old in its tracks before he became aware of the ever-twisting and nightmare path that it compelled him to follow. To it there seemed no end:

> "Stay here, for ever stay.
> *None stays here, none.*
> I cannot find the way.
> *The way leads on.*
> Oh places I have passed!
> *That journey's done.*
> And what will come at last?
> *The road leads on.*"

until one day he emerged from the labyrinth

> "To the world, the still fields swift with flowers, the trees
> All bright with blossom, the little green hills, the sea,
> The sky and all in movement under it,
> Shepherds and flocks and birds and the young and the old,"

in a mood of awareness which at any other time would be naive, and with a sense of profound release which only the burdened of mind or heart can know when a healing hand touches them and the dark illusory shapes of sorrow or despair dissolves like a morning mist in the face of the sun. Mr. Muir's style owes little to any single poet. He is direct, sparing in his use of imagery, varied enough in form to hold our interest at a high level, and uncompromising in his avoidance of the current fashions of technique. The relevance of his experiences to life as most of us know it and

the compelling sincerity of his method in recreating them can hardly fail to enlarge the vision of those who would see.

At the other extreme of individualism one finds Mr. W. S. Graham. Mr. Graham is a poet whose sincerity and talent have never been seriously in doubt, but it is mostly by chance that either penetrate the deliberately complicated verbal patterns with which he attempts to obscure even the simplest ideas. Why should he write :

> "To put it springtime the green shepherd
> Sheepdogging my fertile heel to word
> Plants this birthplace with one rebellion
> As one place flourished with flute and whin."

unless he is really intending to be difficult? It is said that he has been strongly influenced by Thomas. At a superficial level, yes. The word-coining, the compacted and plethoric imagery, the double allusions in single phrases, the inverted syntax, the absence of punctuation, the emphasis on sound—all are Thomas. But his vision is absent, and when we strip Mr. Graham down to the bare bones we find him there—and a genuine poet—but a much smaller one than he appeared. Nonetheless he has written some memorable and even lucid poems (such as the short *Shian Bay*) and obviously stimulated by the challenge of the sea, his best are those which draw their substance or imagery from its "white threshold" of foam—which to him is the edge of adventure; sometimes, perhaps, of disaster. Mr. Graham communicates just enough to make us wish he could communicate more.

Several poets of Mr. MacNeice's generation seem at present to be inviting an assessment by the publication of their "collected" works. But as a poet at forty-three has half his life ahead we should not be led to premature conclusions. Of Mr. MacNeice this is especially so. The critics have never been able to make up their minds about him simply because he has consistently refused to make up his mind about himself. His was not the *best* work of the 1930s Auden group—but avoiding their grosser blunders he averted their grosser disillusionments. Disillusionment is in fact almost outside his experience because it precedes the starting point of his philosophy. He knows that nothing is what it purports to be from the word "go" and accepting this order of things finds satisfaction in telling us the answers before we have posed the problems. He is really a most acute observer of life at its surface, but in spite of his artistic and progressive inclinations he seldom portrays it as anything more profound than it might appear to any fairly intelligent middle-class Londoner. His manner is slick and often

journalistic—sometimes it becomes almost pure reportage (as in Letter to *Graham and Anna*)—but many of the shorter poems, particularly those which appeared in *Springboard* reveal his truer talent and integrity. *The Trolls* (in spite of its difficult opening to section (ii) "Than which not any could be found other/ and outside which is less than nothing—/ This, as they call it, life.") should be bracketed with *Prayer Before Birth* as among the most evocative poems he has written. But Mr. MacNeice has a considerable claim to distinction as a pioneer of radio verse drama and it may well be that his chief work will lie in that field. For the time being he remains firmly seated on the fence.

Furnishing a fantastic situation with the intriguing props of 15th century England, Mr. Fry has brought together some unlikely characters in a dance of conversation, drama and comedy which can only be described as fascinating. He has an outrageous sense of humour, the sharpest wit, and a most delightful insight into some of the more amusing human frailties. He has, too, both the eye and (more important) the ear so essential to a poetic play. The theme and main action of the play move around Thomas Mendip (a young man with the odd wish to be hanged) and Jennet Jourdemaine (a young witch—literally, so it is said—with the very natural wish not to be burned). It seems a pity that Mr. Fry had to resolve this interesting situation by recourse to conventional love —but perhaps there was no other way. In any case his play has come to stay, so we had better like it as it is.

LIONEL MONTEITH.

The Naked Mountain : Stanley Snaith (Co-operative Art Service).
Deeper into the Forest : Roy Daniells (McClelland & Stewart, Toronto. 2$ 50.)
The Man Who Did Not Die : R. L. Kelly (Cornerstone Publications 12s. 6d.)

"A WORK of art is good," said Rilke, "When it has grown out of necessity." And of Mr. Stanley Snaith's daemon the driving urgency is beyond doubt, investing as it does his new and slender production—*The Naked Mountain* is a molehill of print, comprising eight short poems only—with a significance out of all proportion to mere size.

This is religious poetry, Gnostic in its relation of the contemporary dilemma with ultimate truth. It is good poetry, measured not alone by the Rilkean yardstick, but because it achieves the universality that is of poetry's essence. And it is highly civilized, civilization in poetry implying sensitivity and deep but controlled emotion.

Weakness emerges in the last and technically least successful poem, *Small Arms Practice,* which does not entirely convince. But the tensely emotional indictment in *Hiroshima,* even though one may not echo it, is magnificently effective. Simplicity, universality, depth—with these stigmata of authenticity the work is signed : these and the taut, controlled form that Baudelaire held to be integral to poetry mark Mr. Snaith as a writer whose further work will be awaited with interest.

Le style c'est l'homme. But the Canadian poet Mr. Roy Daniells upsets that particular apple-cart, being equally at ease in a slickly mordant sophistication and an "imagery of enchantment" that never seduces him into the Kingdom of Ivory Towers. *Deeper into the Forest,* produced in a strikingly beautiful format and carrying a laudatory notice by Dr. Earle Birney, the distinguished poet and critic, is conspicuously preoccupied with death — one is tempted, Mr. Daniell's "tough" facet in mind, to say with Death-in-the-afternoon. But he attempts and mainly achieves the difficult alchemy of fusing contemporary malaise with truth-for-all-time and his fundamentally religious poetry answers to the touchstones of depth, simplicity and firmness of form.

If any handful of words can describe it, Mr. R. L. Kelly's *The Man Who Did Not Die* is a modernized *Quest of the Holy Grail* with its "hero," Christopher Mann, seeking ultimate truth. But the book defies classification. Amorphous and rich, it is like a crammed trunk that, with its lid flung open, spills its diversity haphazard. It is not a novel, though conforming loosely to Mr. E. M. Forster's dictum that "a novel tells a story," and, stuffed into that pigeon-hole, it bulges out rebelliously. Naive and without style, it leaves the impression that it could effectively have been written in no other way; and characterisation there is none—the flat characters are mere microphones for what Mr. Kelly has to say. And what has he to say? So much, and so strangely does he say it, that no adequate summary is possible. As for its place as a subject for review in these pages—it is certainly not poetry, yet the very heart of poetry is in it and it well repays reading, uphill work though the reading is.

MICHAEL REDGROVE.

These Years : edited by Howard Sergeant (Arnold, 4s. 6d.).

THE intention of *These Years* is entirely laudable. The few existing anthologies introducing contemporary poetry for use in schools have not proved supremely suitable. *These Years* brings us nearer to the minute, is inexpensive, elegantly printed on good

paper, attractive to look at and handle (essential for first impressions), and is admirably edited both for choice and for arrangement.

It is possible to quarrel with the omissions (among others, say MacDonagh's *The Painter's Rose* or Mervyn Peake's *The Colt*) but they are probably due to refused permissions or copyright awkwardnesses. It is also possible to argue against some of the poems chosen, especially those included with the idea of using them as familiar paths leading to the unfamiliar main road. Chesterton's pompous-fantastical twopence-coloured *Lepanto* can now go the way of all gothic renascences: it takes up too much room in a book of this size. Eliot's cat-stuff is too childish and class-conscious for a secondary-school anthology, but *Macavity* certainly has its attractions.

The majority of poems included have been written or published within the last fifteen years, and it is refreshing to consider Housman between Sean Jennett and Louis MacNeice, or Masefield between Day Lewis and Norman Nicholson. This is an entrancing collection, worthy in itself, and ready to prove important in the appreciation of living poetry in the schools. It could be improved by the addition of a short note on each poet.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

Poems and Songs: E. N. Da C. Andrade (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.).
Speak With The Sun: David Campbell (Chatto & Windus, 6s.).
Leeds University Verse Anthology: 6s.
Five: Edited by J. B. Donne May, 1949. 1s.

ALTHOUGH Professor Andrade makes no further claim for his collected poems than the desire to please those few people who still retain a taste for lyric poetry, I cannot help feeling that, despite its innocent-seeming preface, there is an implicit challenge to modernist writers in every phrase. He is a confirmed traditionalist and, in so far as he has declined to be misled by the shifting influences of ephemeral poetic schools, is much to be admired. He has certain obvious, but possibly superficial, affinities with the Elizabethans, the Jacobean song writers and with the Caroline lyrists but in so far as he reflects an age and an attitude to life that have irrevocably passed away, he is culturally irrelevant. For this simple reason so many of the love songs sound false, forced and insincere.

And yet there are moments when the reader is charmed by the poet's skill and grace as in the lovely song, "Go teach the swan to swim," to regret the passing of a statelier tradition. There are echoes of Fletcher that delight and beguile and "The Paradox" is good enough for Ben Johnson himself to have written :—

"You ask what's soft, yet strong?
I show you silk.
What's straight, yet sways with grace?
The lily stalk."

Paradoxically this is a book that both charms and annoys a reader conscious of living in the century of mass production and atomic bombs.

David Campbell's first book to be published in England, *Speak With The Sun,* has apparently drawn high praise from Day Lewis which seems out of proportion to its contents. The poems are undoubtedly fresh and the themes and forms various but I cannot help feeling that much of this freshness is the accidental by-product of a different geography and that the strangeness of the Australian dialect and idiom accounts in part for the vitality of diction. He reveals an easy narrative style, owing much to the old ballads, and a slickness and humour that pleasantly tickle our Western European palates that have fed so long on an over-refined and subtilized diet.

But there are signs, too, that when the poet has loosed himself from the entanglements of early twentieth century English influence, he will develop a more muscular and personal style with which to engage themes and subjects of greater moment than this book contains. *The Season of the Year* suggests the more thoughtful and accomplished writer that David Campbell may yet become.

Five emanates from Oxford, the products of several young men in process of becoming serious poets and is a commendable enterprise, while the *Leeds University Anthology* shows that the red-brick 'varsities have their own songsters. The well known names of Lascelles Abercrombie, Herbert Read, Rowland Childe and T. R. Hodgson grace these pages with others who have trapsed along the same distempered corridors between 1924 and 1948. The University anthology, hitherto confined to Oxford and Cambridge, is a venture which other provincial universities might do well to copy and this delightful and beautifully produced volume sets a very high standard.

JOHN BARRON MAYS.

Poems: David Wright (P.L. Editions, 5s.).

HAVING recently seen certain of Mr. Wright's poems in a current magazine I approached his first volume of poetry with a strong prejudice in his favour. It was in fact disappointing to find that a poet with such undeniable talent and such genuine feeling for the best traditions of English poetry could allow so much bad writing to go into print. Oxonian Miltonisms meet the eye on every page, bits of undigested Hopkins, Dylan Thomas (or could it be Treece?), and T. S. Eliot choke the reader like bones in a dainty bit of fish.

Nevertheless David Wright's *Poems,* for all their subjective flights of extravagant egoism, their witness to the tribulations of a sensitive soul in torment rather than of a poet doing his job, claim the attention of serious readers of poetry far more than most first books. It has a unity of style, technique and subject-matter beneath the apparent inadequacy of what Mr. Richards defines as "tone," and the critical reader should find little difficulty in sorting out the mawkish trash from the genuine poetry—for there certainly are moments of this. It seems plain that this is a regrettable collection of poems of immaturity, and that the poet, had he studied the critical moments of Mr. Eliot's essay on Massinger and attained a more proportionate view of his contemporaries, would be able to handle the methods he obviously admires in their work with more success. I suspect that he has already advanced far beyond the inadequacies of this first book and that only long delays in printing have caused it to appear so late.

The undeniably deep experience of the poet sublimated continually in the image of a drowned man, if better objectified, would be very effective. As it is the poems appear to owe most of their value to borrowed imagery and subject-matter, as well as exasperatingly obvious associations. One of the chief reasons I have for admiring Mr. Wright's poems in spite of very serious blemishes is the undoubted fact of their music. This word MUSIC is a term much abused by critics to-day, for practically anything reasonably rhythmical and not too cacophonous passes as MUSICAL—I myself use the term here in the sense of "capable of being set to music." The shanty on page 15, and the four lyrics on page 8 are truly musical in this latter sense.

There are moments of intensity in Mr. Wright's poems, and if he will eschew his painful mannerisms, I believe he will realise in verse what must be an admirable poetic personality. He speaks in an unusually terse line of the

"Integral vision of the single mind"

—if he can find this vision in his own mind we shall owe much to him. PETER RUSSELL.

Wordsworth: Herbert Read (Faber, 15s. 0d.).
William Wordsworth: an introduction and selection by Norman Nicholson (Phœnix House, 8s. 6d.).
The Tell-Tale Article: G. Rostrevor Hamilton (Heinemann, 10s. 6d.).
Walter de la Mare: Henry Charles Duffin (Sidgwick & Jackson, 8s. 6d.).
The Common Asphodel: Robert Graves (Hamish Hamilton, 15s. 0d.).

IN the revised version of his study of Wordsworth, Mr. Herbert Read has included new information in support of his psychological thesis concerning Wordsworth, and an additional chapter on the poet's philosophy. Mr. Read expresses the opinion that it was mainly due to the emotional stimulus of his love for Annette Vallon that Wordsworth realised his potentialities as a poet, and that the rapid decline of his powers was the direct result of his guilt and remorse after he had decided not to marry Annette, despite the fact that she was the mother of his child. When this study was first published in 1930 it caused a considerable amount of controversy in literary circles, and it says a great deal for Mr. Read's convincing methods of argument that many critics now accept the theory as established fact. But a number of questions remain unanswered. Until more is known of Wordsworth's real intentions in the matter and of the whole circumstances surrounding the case, it is impossible to reconstruct the scene with any degree of accuracy. Quite apart from these interesting speculations, Mr. Read is master of his subject, and his examination of the poet's philosophy and its relation to the poetry serves to re-emphasize those qualities of genius which Wordsworth undoubtedly possessed.

Mr. Norman Nicholson adopts an entirely different approach—that of the regionalist—and draws a parallel between the rocks of the Lake District and the three modes of Wordsworth's poetry. "Skiddaw Slate represents the basic Wordsworth, the plain, bold, solid verse of the experiments and of *Resolution and Independence;* the volcanic rock represents the soaring poetry of *Tintern Abbey;* and the Silurian rock represents the long anti-climax of the later years." Provided that the parallel is not pressed too far (and Mr. Nicholson warns us against it), the generalization may assist readers in obtaining a bird's-eye view of the Wordsworthian poetic land-

scape. The poems, including four complete books, as well as extracts from other books, of the *Prelude,* are admirably chosen so as to provide a representative collection of Wordsworth's work at its most inspired.

The Tell-Tale Article by Mr. G. Rostrevor Hamilton contains three separate but related essays. His attention having been arrested by the incidence of the definite article in modern poetry, the author has pursued an unusual line of investigation which, if not entirely substantiating all the conclusions he draws, has certainly brought to light a number of significant facts. After proving that the definite article is used with far greater frequency by the moderns than by earlier poets, Mr. Hamilton examines the necessity for its use and finds that its frequency in contemporary poetry is "symptomatic of a weakness in structure, a degeneration of syntax." From this point he analyses the work of Eliot in closer detail which leads him to suggest, in spite of his respect for Eliot's achievements, that it reflects "the failure of the sense of man's greatness . . . which more than anything else has weakened English poetry for the last fifty years." The second essay, *Tradition and the Sense of Man's Greatness,* is a study of Eliot's attitude and technique, and is followed by a dissertation on *The Meaning of Tradition.* Whether all Mr. Hamilton's conclusions are acceptable or not, his book should be read for its lucid and penetrating criticism of the poetry of our time.

"The elect fall in love with Truth, the imaginative with Reality," wrote Walter de la Mare in his anthology of *Love.* For the purposes of his study, Mr. Duffin has accepted the distinction and divided the poetry of de la Mare into two categories, the Poetry of Reality (largely the work published before 1920) and the Poetry of Truth (work published after 1920). It is easy to see where Mr. Duffin's sympathies lie because he devotes the most of his book to the former class of poetry, though not so easy to determine the reasons for his classifications. Poetry of Truth, it is explained, contributes to the working philosophy of the age, but however far from the scientific or materialistic conceptions of life de la Mare's earlier work may be, one could maintain a valid argument that it adds to our knowledge of man in relation to his environment. I feel certain that Mr. Duffin would agree. Yet it would be ungrateful to quibble over such a small point when the author has entered into the spirit of the poetry so wholeheartedly. His consideration of de la Mare's style and subtle rhythm effects (in particular, his use of rhythmic variations) and his acquaintance with the mysterious "delamarian" world of the senses, will enable readers to understand how and why the poet achieves his results.

It would be impossible to do justice to *The Common Asphodel* in any article less than 1,000 words in length. This volume, in which are collected the essays written by Mr. Robert Graves during the period 1922-49, ranges over a rich diversity of subjects, from Lucretius to Eliot and Cummings, from Shakespeare's Fair Copies to Scientific English, and gathers into its capacious net innumerable aspects of poetry and literature. Mr. Graves is a stylist of the first order and might be read with considerable advantage by many of the younger critics. Not that *The Common Asphodel* is remarkable as criticism. Mr. Graves is too illogical in his conflicting ideas and a little too apt to sweep away whole generations of poets to be relied upon as a critic possessing a sound historical sense of values, yet his analysis of individual poems can be surprisingly relevant. It is in the expression of a controversial but individual opinion that he makes the deepest impression, both as a writer and thinker.

MORTIMER STEELE.

Poetry Awards: (University of Pennsylvania Press, $2).

THE task *Poetry Awards* has set itself, that of selecting individual pieces for prize awards from more than one country is not an easy one. Variety of style and context is not to be dispensed with lightly by any average critical standard. The selectors in this case, however, seem to have struck a fair medium, for the margin of quality between those chosen for this year's edition is certainly narrow. It is impossible to say that either James Rorty (first prize winner), Maureen Cobb Mabbot (second prize), or Alfred Hayes (third prize) has produced a poem which is conspicuous above the work of the United Kingdom poets, although they are possibly the best of the 1949 American magazines, and definitely, so far as James Rorty is concerned, the most local. The United Kingdom poets are in the minority, but a predominance of American work detracts from neither their value nor their quality.

The commanding overtone of the volume is one of liberalism, and this is its most commendable feature. The varieties of style and context, mentioned earlier, are represented in all their extremes. One finds free verse juxtaposed with the traditional sonnet form; and with the intimate exaltations of Lilian Bowes Lyon will be noticed the sylvan philosophising of Elizabeth Harrison and the resentments of Alfred Hayes. The editorial makes it obvious that this liberalism was intentional. It could be suggested that it was unavoidable, but none-the-less it is the book's own recommendation.

FRANCIS CABUCHE.